

**COUNCIL BUSINESS**  
**Consent Agenda**  
**Whatcom Local Integrating Organization**

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**Proposed Action**

The Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council recognizes the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards as the Local Integration Organization for the implementation of the Action Agenda in the Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed area.

**Background**

The Leadership Council has recognized five local integration organizations since June 2010 (Hood Canal, North Olympic, San Juan, South Central, and South Sound). The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards located in Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed has developed a proposal and scope of work to be recognized as the Local Integration Organization in their area. This proposal and scope of work reflects a locally-based and locally-formed effort between the tribes and local governments, along with the other groups engaged in the board structure.

**Action Agenda Consistency**

Establishing Local Integration Organizations is consistent with, and advances the, Action Agenda via the following near term actions: D.3 (5); D.3 (6); D.3 (7) and the following additional priorities: D.3.1; D.3.1.1; D.3.1.2; D.3.1.3; D.3.1.4; D.3.1.5; D.3.1.6; D.3.2; D.3.5.3.

**Stakeholder Input**

The attached proposal and work plan has been developed and approved locally by the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards and its associated staff. The stakeholder input has been collected and integrated through this local process. The attached proposal describes in detail the entities involved in this effort.

**Attachments:**

- Resolution 2010-01
- Staff Analysis
- Consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards' Proposal

## Resolution 2010-01

### ***Recognize the Consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards as the Local Integration Organization in Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed***

**WHEREAS**, the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards is made up of the Whatcom County Executive, Mayor of Bellingham, Manager of Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County, designated policy representatives from the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Mayors of the cities of Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, and policy level decision-makers of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards have submitted a proposal and proposed scope of work to the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council to be recognized as the Local Integration Organization for the Action Agenda in Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed; and

**WHEREAS**, this proposal for recognition is buffered by the need for funding and capacity support to advance this work.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Leadership Council recognizes the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards as the Local Integration Organization for the Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed area and accepts its proposed scope of work as the Local Integrating Organization.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this is a recognition of the tenacity, dedication, and good work being done by the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards and associated structure.

Resolution Moved By: \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution Seconded By: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved/Denied/Deferred (underline one)

**DATE:** November 19, 2010

Staff Analysis  
Proposal To The Leadership Council  
Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed Local Integrating Organization

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LIO Proposal to the Leadership Council  
PSP Staff Analysis – Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed

1) *Describe geographic range.*

The Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed geographic scope encompasses Whatcom County except for those portions included in the Skagit Watershed.

2) *Does the proposed organization have broad support from the local community?*

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards is made up of the combination of the WRIA 1 Policy Board for Watershed Planning and the WRIA 1 Policy Board for Salmon Recovery. Represented on the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards are: Whatcom County Executive, Mayor of Bellingham, Manager of Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County, designated policy representatives from the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Mayors of the cities of Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, and policy level decision-makers of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The consolidated Policy Boards are focused on natural resource issues, specifically salmon recovery and watershed planning/flood management. The consolidated Policy Boards have broad community representation through the governments and state agencies, as well as its structure that includes the land trust and conservation district as members of the staff team.

3) *Do they have the ability/capacity/authority to execute roles and responsibilities inherent to the Local Integrating Organization, such as:*

a. *Advising the Partnership on Action Agenda priorities?*

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards are well situated to advise PSP on Action Agenda priorities because of their representation of elected officials from the responsible local and tribal governments, the integration of other interested and responsible parties through staff and work groups, and the overall focus of work on natural resource recovery. This group is already working to advance priorities within the Action Agenda surrounding water and restoration topics.

b. *Providing assistance to enhance implementation work by local groups?*

The consolidated Policy Boards can enhance implementation work by local groups by helping to collectively identify and articulate priorities for the Whatcom County / Nooksack Watershed. This can be done through a rigorous process to engage the responsible parties and establish the trust needed locally to identify and sequence actions related to Puget Sound recovery.

c. *Working cooperatively to implement strategic actions in the Action Agenda?*

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards and associated structure brings a locally-based and locally-owned perspective to the table,

which will help to identify, plan and implement strategic actions in the Action Agenda. The thoughtful and rigorous structure established by the responsible parties in the Nooksack watershed for recovery work will support a cooperative approach with the Partnership for Action Agenda implementation.

*d. Basing their work in the best scientific information available?*

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards and associated structure has an approach that bases their decisions for funding and prioritizing on the best technical information available, be it from local technical expertise or from regional or even national experts. Currently, the Boards serve the following roles that incorporate best available science into decisions:

- Lead entity structure for salmon recovery;
- In-stream flow negotiations for watershed planning;

The Boards and associated structure is well situated to continue to base their work on the best available scientific information.

*e. Evaluating progress in implementing the Action Agenda at the local scale?*

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards and associated structure is well situated to evaluate progress in implementing the Action Agenda at the local scale. The WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Staff Team is in the beginning phase of developing an adaptive management and monitoring structure that could serve as a foundation for this evaluation.

*4) Is their structure conducive to actualizing the above roles and responsibilities?*

The integrated structure for WRIA 1 watershed and salmon recovery programs was formed out of the desire to maximize efficiencies and coordinate natural resource decisions. These two objectives and the corresponding roles, responsibilities, and approach is well situated to actualizing the above.

*5) How might this proposed organization receive grants and other funds to support staff and assist in the implementation of the local Action Agenda priorities? For example, are they a 501(c)(3) or might they delegate this role to a specific member?*

The WRIA 1 Policy Boards includes membership by the tribes, cities, and county, all of whom can accept and allocate funds through their own administrations. The Boards would likely identify one of these participating groups to serve as a fiscal agent. This approach is currently taken with funds associated with salmon recovery and with watershed planning.

6) *What are the first steps the organization will take, or has taken, toward implementing the Action Agenda?*

The WRIA 1 Joint Board and WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board consolidated their policy meetings in 2007 and established their current integrated structure for decision-making, administrative oversight, and program oversight for watershed planning and salmon recovery in 2009, and has essentially been operating as a “LIO”. They lead salmon recovery in the Nooksack Watershed, they lead watershed planning in WRIA 1, and they coordinate across natural resource issues for the County. As additional funds are available and a need is identified, continued work to refine the set of priorities across the Action Agenda, including nearshore and pollution reduction issues, is part of the work likely to be undertaken.

7) *What are the major challenges this group faces? What is being done to address those challenges?*

The following are the major challenges faced by the WRIA 1 Policy Boards and associated structure:

- **Operational Funding:** Much of the work by the Boards is done by the staff of the participating member entities. These staff are already operating at capacity. In their role as the LIO, further staffing or technical support will be necessary to better implement the local priorities within the Action Agenda.
- **Capital Funding:** Recovery work in the area will require substantial capital investments. For example, additional funding will be needed to address the barrier in the Middle Fork, the water pollution sources in Bellingham Bay, and the work with land owners across the County.

These challenges are persistent and pervasive with the work to recover natural resources. The members of the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards, their staff, and the various invested organizations continue to seek new funds and continue to be reliant on grant funds.

8) *Will this group evolve/change over time?*

This group will likely change over time as newly elected officials populate the Boards, as funding sources fluctuate, and as community investment evolves. The focus and the staff team and work group structures of the Boards will also likely fluctuate over time as work is completed and the work groups advance different priorities.

## **Proposal for Consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards to Act as the Whatcom Action Area Local Integrating Organization**

**Background:** The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards consist of the WRIA 1 Joint Board and WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board. The consolidated Policy Boards' integrated structure places watershed planning (ESHB 2514) and salmon recovery (ESHB 2496) under a unified decision-making structure governed by the WRIA 1 Joint Board and WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board. Watershed planning deals with community concerns related to water quality, water quantity, instream flows, and fish habitat, while salmon recovery to sustainable, harvestable levels deals with ESA listing of Chinook and coordinates implementation of salmonid recovery plans. The purposes of the consolidated Policy Boards are to (1) maximize efficiency of available financial and staff resources, and (2) coordinate decisions across jurisdictions and across natural resource management topics. The successful outcome of these processes is essential to ensure the ability of tribal members to exercise treaty reserved rights to fish and water. The WRIA 1 Policy Boards' continued commitment to integrated program management is demonstrated by the members' 2009 consensus creation of the unified WRIA 1 Management Team and recent directive to advance a water rights settlement framework for the lower Nooksack subbasin. The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards' do not assume or exercise jurisdictional authorities of member governments.

**Proposal:** The WRIA 1 Policy Boards propose to become the **Whatcom Action Area Local Integrating Organization** for Puget Sound Action Agenda implementation.

**Role and Purpose:** The WRIA 1 Policy Boards' actions to integrate WRIA 1 programs includes a governance structure that functions at a policy, management, and staff level to implement the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1 and the WRIA 1 Salmonid Recovery Plan. The consolidated Boards are positioned to coordinate implementation of Action Agenda priorities that are consistent with or complement local priorities. The consolidated Boards provide a forum to involve partners, community groups, and citizens in:

- Reviewing and recommending priorities for actions and strategies within the Whatcom County Action Area that will inform the Puget Sound Partnership on local priorities for the Action Agenda;
- Discussing, presenting, and gathering information on topics relevant to implementing actions in local watershed plans and Puget Sound Action Agenda overlapping priorities, goals, and objectives;
- Reviewing, providing feedback, and/or recommending funding strategies for implementing local priorities within the context of the Action Agenda;
- Evaluating and advancing work based on the best scientific information available;
- Collaborating and leveraging efforts across WRIA 1; and
- Evaluating progress.

**Governance Structure:** The governance structure for integrated WRIA 1 programming and the composition and role of each organizational level are described below and appear as a diagram in Attachment A.

Consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Board: The composition of the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards is established by their respective Interlocal Agreements, and provides the government-to-government structure necessary for tribal participation. The WRIA 1 Joint Board is made up of the Whatcom County Executive, Mayor of Bellingham, Manager of Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County, and designated policy representatives from the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe. The WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board consists of the Mayors of the cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, the Whatcom County Executive, and policy level decision-makers of the Salmon Co-Managers (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Lummi Nation, and Nooksack Indian Tribe).

The consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Boards' role in the integrated governance structure is to represent signatory government's legislative bodies in questions of high-level WRIA 1 programming. The policy Boards discuss watershed and salmon program topics. Endorsements of programs/actions are forwarded from the WRIA 1 Policy Boards to the various Legislative Bodies as applicable. Representatives of federal, state, and regional agencies and/or programs interact at the WRIA 1 Policy Board level. Opportunities for Public Comment are provided on agendas of the WRIA 1 Policy Boards.

WRIA 1 Management Team: The WRIA 1 Management Team consists of management and policy level staff members representing the WRIA 1 Policy Board signatories. The purpose of the Management Team is to engage in contextual discussions providing the framework for program integration and coordination, administer the program policies of the WRIA 1 Policy Boards, provide direction to Staff Teams and Work Groups, and make recommendations on program policies to the WRIA 1 Policy Boards. Opportunities for Public Comment are provided on agendas of the WRIA 1 Management Team.

Watershed and Salmon Recovery Staff Teams: The Watershed Staff Team and the Salmon Recovery Staff Team implement actions, programs, projects, and tasks identified by the WRIA 1 Policy Boards and/or WRIA 1 Management Team. The Watershed Staff Team is composed of staff of the WRIA 1 Joint Board and the Washington Department of Ecology. The composition of the Salmon Recovery Staff Team includes staff of the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Board entities, Whatcom Land Trust, and Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. The Salmon Recovery Staff Team meeting participation often includes other partners or organizations when meeting agenda topics are scheduled that may be of interest to a broader group.

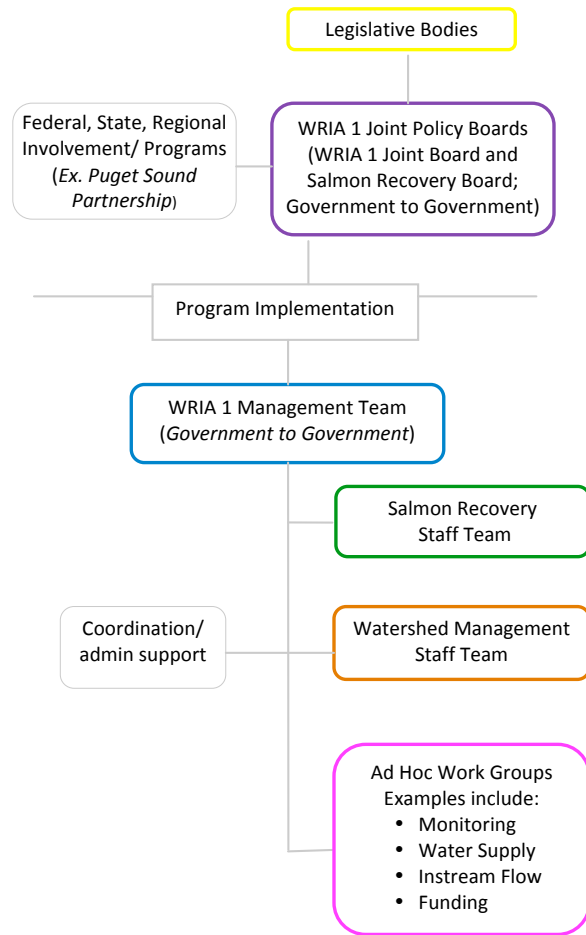
Work Groups: Work Groups are established for topic or program specific purposes with the composition determined in part by the topic or program they are formed to address. The Work Groups are intended to provide significant opportunity for involving private citizens and other community stakeholders in the local implementation process.

**Partners, Community Organizations, and Agencies:** The Role and Purpose section of this proposal provides a summary of the integrated governance structure for WRIA 1 Program Management including representation and involvement at the different organizational levels. Under this structure, the opportunities to involve and coordinate with partners, community organizations, and agencies on a regular basis are far reaching. A map of organizations and agencies that the WRIA 1 Policy Boards or its members currently work with appears in Attachment A. This group includes:

- Acme/VanZandt Flood Control Subzone
- Bellingham Public Works
- Bertrand Watershed Improvement District
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Farm Friends
- Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee
- Lynden Public Works
- Lummi Natural Resources Department
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- NOAA- Fisheries
- Nooksack Indian Tribe Natural Resources Department
- Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
- Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County
- Puget Sound Partnership
- South Fork Community Members
- Sumas Public Works
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State University/Sea Grant
- Western Washington University
- Whatcom Conservation District
- Whatcom County Marine Resource Committee
- Whatcom County Parks Department
- Whatcom County Planning Department
- Whatcom County Public Works
- Whatcom Land Trust

## Attachment A: WRIA 1 Policy Boards organizational structure and connection to collaborators and stakeholders.

The organizational structure below is taken from the WRIA 1 Policy Board-approved June 30, 2009 *Governance Structure for Implementing WRIA 1 Programs*.



The approved organizational structure to the left provides a number of direct and indirect opportunities for the community, stakeholders, organizations, and others to interact with the members of the consolidated WRIA 1 Policy Board or its associated Teams. Using the structure to the left, a color-coded map is provided below that shows the direct and indirect connections of organizations, stakeholders and others to the local elements of the WRIA 1 governance structure.

